



Jon Schultz, President

## Waterbury Fire Fighters Association, Local 1339

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Uniformed Professional Fire Fighters Association of Connecticut

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Honorable Co-Chairs of the Public Safety Committee Senator Hartley and Representative Dargan, as well as the entire Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today. My name is Rick Hart, Deputy Chief from the Waterbury Fire Department with 24 years experience. My credentials include graduation from the National Fire Academy's Executive Fire Officer Program, I sit as the New England Section representative of the Emergency Vehicle Management Section for the International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC), and I have a Master's degree in Executive Leadership. I am here to voice my support for **S.B. No.103 (Raised ) An Act Concerning Compliance With Fire Department Apparatus Maintenance Standards.**

Some history, because we need so desperately to learn from it:

On May 10, 1990, Engine 11 was responding to an alarm of fire, lost its brakes and struck a tree, killing two firefighters and severely injuring the lieutenant. The National Transportation Safety Board, on April 29, 1991, issued a statement, based upon their investigation indicating the apparatus had only one of the four brake shoes contacting the rear brake system. This resulted in a braking capacity of only 36% due to the abhorrent condition of the brakes. By the Department's own policy, the apparatus was to be serviced every 150 hours of engine time. The apparatus involved in the accident had its 150 hr service in September 1988, although it had been in service for 267 since that check. The subsequent service check in November 1989, 468 hrs. had passed.

May 19, 2007, two apparatus collided killing one and severely injuring another. 6 others suffered moderate to minor *physical* injuries. In my capacities as a Chief Officer, the most challenging duty station I had was being placed in charge of the Department's Apparatus Maintenance facility in 2007. The impetus for this assignment was the direct result of recommendations by the joint Connecticut State Police Truck Squad and the Waterbury Police Department investigation into this accident that killed my friend your friend Sen. Hartley, Capt. John Francis Keane. "There was a complete lack of adequate inspections and service conducted on the apparatus, which lead investigators to report that this was indicative to the bureau' according to the official police report. I was tasked with creating change in and creating a preventive maintenance program which increased safety and decreased downtime. Again, poor maintenance and a lack of inspections were cited by this report identical to the NTSB's recommendations in 1991, history continues to repeat itself.

January 9, 2009, Boston Mass a career lieutenant was killed and the driver was severely injured when the Boston Fire Department ladder truck lost its brakes and struck a building." NIOSH investigators concluded that, in order to minimize the risk of similar occurrences, fire departments should:

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Patrick J. Reilly,  
Vice-President Emeritus

- *Ensure that preventive maintenance programs are developed and implemented for fire apparatus according to manufacturer guidelines/specifications and national consensus standards.*
- *Ensure that preventive maintenance on fire apparatus is performed and/or overseen by qualified personnel who meet the certification requirements outlined in NFPA 1071 Standard for Emergency Vehicle Technician Professional Qualifications."*

These are three examples of tragedies that can be prevented in the future with the passage of S.B. 103. There is limited data available concerning mechanical failure due to the lack of maintenance since fire apparatus is exempt from DOT regulations.

In 2007, in a survey of the 200 most populous cities nationwide, 97% provided fire-based EMS. In Waterbury in FY 08-09 the department answered approximately 5600 calls for service. In FY 09-10 that number of call rose slightly to approximately 19,000 calls for service- a 350% increase! What this means is two things, 1. Increase in call volume has a direct correlation to increased wear and tear on apparatus, and 2. This increase requires a corresponding increased frequency of preventive maintenance. Unfortunately, the U.S. Department of Transportation Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration in CFR 390 para.f states Exemptions, line 5 "The operation of fire trucks and rescue vehicles while involved in emergency and related operations." This means fire apparatus, some in excess of 75,000 lbs are exempt from the same maintenance and inspection criteria as the truck that caused the horrific scene on Avon Mountain in 2005. We all know the response to that tragedy-increased inspections by the DMV and State Police. How is this remotely rational? Shouldn't the Fire Service follow suit? Especially when public safety is at risk.

The argument will be made concerning increased costs associated with increased inspections and preventive maintenance. The contrary is the case according to research I conducted in writing Preventive Maintenance: A Proactive Approach to Apparatus Readiness and Safety for the National Fire Academy. My research found that out of service time decreased 72% with preventive maintenance. By reducing out of service time, departments are able to reduce repair costs, increase service life, and ensures public safety by having frontline apparatus ready to respond safely and in a timely fashion to serve the public. The private sector, from Roadway Freight to Federal Express to UPS embrace preventive maintenance for what it is-a true cost savings measure. With apparatus costing in excess of \$550,000, shouldn't municipalities protect their investment and embrace this legislation as well?